1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Today the empire of Bornu is a Muslim emirate, or kingdom, which forms a subdivision of Bornu Province in the northeastern corner of Nigeria. The emirate covers an area of 24,000 square miles and, according to the 1952 census, has a population of about 1 million people of whom 626,000 are Kanuri—the dominant ethnic group of the kingdom. There are also about 160,000 Fulani and Shuwa who tend their cattle in the area and who carry out a semi-nomadic way of life. Another 225,000 people belong to small pagan groups, from south of the province and the Cameroons, as well as from the Hausa-speaking areas to the west and from the other regions of Nigeria. The emirate also includes about 5000 non-Nigerians, who are from Europe, America, the Near East, and other African countries.

Including the emirate, Bornu Province has approximately 1,600,000 people, 750,000 of whom are Kanuri. Thus many Kanuri live outside the political boundaries of the emirate. Indeed Kanuri can be found in all major cities of northern Nigeria in substantial numbers as well as in the neighboring territories of Chad and Niger. In order to identify the population with a particular territory, however, it is convenient to think of the emirate sub-division of Bornu Province as Bornu, the traditional homeland of the Kanuri kingdom. These are the people who are the subject of this book; they describe themselves as "Kanuri—the people of Bornu." As noted above, outside this entity—of Bornu—there are many other Kanuri, and a political entity, Bornu Province. However, these will be referred to by their full names, while the word "Bornu" will be reserved for the political system, whose present expression, the emirate or kingdom, is continuous with the Bornu of precolonial times. This reflects as well the attitude of the people themselves, who use the term "Bornu" to refer primarily to the emirate rather than the larger area of Bornu Province.

One other point should be kept in mind about the population figures. There has been a more recent Nigerian census since 1952, and although the details are unknown as yet, it is generally accepted that the more recent figures are in the neighborhood of thirty-five to forty-five percent higher than those of 1952. This means that Bornu may actually have nearly 900,000 in population, and Bornu Province may reach as high as two million persons, as of 1966.

The Kanuri of Bornu live spread out over the entire area of the emirate, in 306 named and variously sized settlements, ranging from Maiduguri, the capital, with its 80,000 population, down to tiny hamlets of three or four households. Most of the people, about two-thirds of them, live in 248 named village units that range in size from 1000 to 5000. About one-quarter of the population, on the other hand, live in eleven cities whose population is 10,000 or over. This statistical information from the census masks an important point, however, for the towns and villages are really area units and each has within its territory, a set of satellite hamlets that often total to more than half the population of the town or village area. It is this pattern that gives to Bornu its "filled-up" quality even though the population density is approximately twenty-five to forty persons per square mile when calculated from the 1952 census figures or perhaps as much as forty to sixty persons per square mile on the basis of more recent counts. Riding out on horseback into the bush one never feels alone; here and there sprinkled in one or two mile intervals in all directions are little hamlets with their surrounding farmlands while more intermittently, perhaps every five or six miles, are the larger towns and villages. Ev-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

ruled its territory, and attempted to keep the peace with its neighbors and tributary states. 175 648

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the area of what is now Northern Nigeria was rocked by the Fulani wars under a religious leader, Othman dan Fodio, who proclaimed a *Jihad* or holy war. Ultimately these developments resulted in the founding of the empire of Sokoto. In Bornu the local Fulani organized an attack on the Kanuri kingdom, not so much to support the Sokoto Empire, as to take advantage of it and set up principalities of their own. By 1808, the Fulani in Bornu constituted a dangerous threat. Indeed they had succeeded in attacking, defeating and sacking the ancient capital of Bornu, Birni Ngazargamo. When this happened the ruler and his followers fled towards Lake Chad and were not able to return to the city until some unexpected aid from Kanem enabled them to deliver a powerful defeat to the Fulani forces some six weeks after they had abandoned the capital. A few years later in the winter of 1811–1812 another Fulani force attacked and pillaged the capital. Again the Kanuri were helped by this same Kanembu chief or Shehu who defeated the Fulani and sent them fleeing westward to the borders of Bornu.

However, this aid was to change the entire history of the empire. From 1812 onwards the traditional Bornu government lost its control of the state. The Shehu, Mohammed el Aminu, El Kanemi, or Shehu Laminu as he is remembered locally, had the only effective armed force in the Bornu kingdom, and he used this to control sporadic Fulani uprisings that continued until at least the 1820s. Both the traditional government and the Shehu moved away from the western and northern boundaries and set up in adjacent towns near the west shore of Lake Chad. People soon realized that the Shehu held power in the state and flocked to his town, while that of the old Magumi Sefuwa monarch became a small redoubt for those still loyal to the ancient dynasty. The former leaders still retained the royal title, held court, and collected or were given some of the state revenues. When they intrigued against Shehu Laminu, he simply deposed them. At the same time he made bargains with rival claimants to the old throne so that any changes in the royal office, made under his direction, would be to his own advantage. Meanwhile the ancient rulers came more and more to be simply ceremonial puppets in the hands of the real ruler of Bornu, Shehu Laminu. 175 642 648 643 662

Yet Laminu never asserted ultimate control over the kingdom. Even after he had built a new capital, at Kuka, for himself and his dependents, the small village of Birni nearby was maintained for the ancient monarchy. Across the entire Sudan and beyond, however, he was recognized as the real ruler of Bornu. He was the leader of its administration and his political, military, and judicial sagacity were and still are lauded in praise songs that match these secular skills with his supernatural powers. Indeed his fame spread to Europe as well. This resulted from the writings of Denham and Clapperton, who crossed the desert in the 1820s and remained for an extended period in Bornu learning about its people and of the double regency under Shehu Laminu's control. Laminu died in 1835 and it was not until a decade later in 1845 or 1846 that his son, Omar, finally did away with the last remaining members of the Sefuwa dynasty proclaiming himself and his royal heirs to be the only rulers of Bornu. This was the occasion for the formal inception of Bornu's second dynasty whose descendants are the ruling family in the kingdom at the pres- 175 642 643

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

ent time. It was during Shehu Omar's reign that Barth, the famous African explorer, visited Bornu and obtained the first written account of its history.

The descendants of Shehu Laminu ruled throughout the rest of the nineteenth century without undue excitement. There were always succession problems indicated by struggles for the throne among possible heirs and during the 1850s there was even a revolt in which a prince of the realm overturned his older brother for a few months until the deposed monarch was able to gather his forces and recapture the government. But such events had always been the common currency of Bornu's history.

Later in the century, however, a tragedy befell the kingdom. A marauding brigand of the Sudan who had gathered around himself an army of well-disciplined and trained soldiers slashed his way westward across Africa conquering and pillaging as he went. In 1893 he crossed over into Bornu and demolished the capital, defeating the Bornu army and sending the Shehu with some of his followers fleeing to the north and west of Bornu. This man, Rabeh, is still remembered today in Bornu for the tyrannical hold he attempted to establish and for the plundering and sacking of many Bornu villages which he carried out while subduing the state. Eventually he built himself a capital in southeast Bornu and married his daughter to the son of the Emir of Sokoto. Rabeh provides some interesting grounds for speculation. For had colonial expansion into the area not conflicted with Rabeh's own plans, he might very likely have founded Bornu's third dynasty. As it was Britain, France, and Germany were carving up West Africa for themselves.

The French arrived first and soon found themselves at war with Rabeh. Eventually he was defeated and killed, and although his sons attempted to keep control of their father's new found kingdom, it was a futile gesture in the face of French arms. By 1902 the British had taken over what is now Bornu province in northeastern Nigeria; the Germans obtained the Cameroons—containing Rabeh's old capital, and the French set up their headquarters at Fort Lamy in what is now Chad. The old Kanembu Shehu was put on the throne again by the French at Dikwa (Rabeh's capital) and was then maintained by the Germans. In the scramble over territory that characterized this period, the British persuaded the Shehu to return to Nigerian territory, where they have been ever since as rulers of Bornu.

The British first brought the Shehu to Kuka, the nineteenth-century capital of the Kanembu Shehus, which they had promised to rebuild for him as part of the bargain for his return. They set up their own headquarters in the village of Magumeri and tried to administer the state from these two centers. The job of administration from Magumeri proved impossible, as did the prospect of rebuilding Kuka; it had been sacked and demolished during the Rabeh period. In 1905 the colonial government decided to set up a new capital at Maiduguri in southern Bornu which would serve as a center for both the emirate and the Province of Bornu. Today it still serves both these functions and is the major urban center of the area.

The British also reorganized the political structure of the state, and geared it into the wider colonial government they were evolving for Northern Nigeria as a whole under the leadership of Lord Lugard. Under Lugard's direction they also stopped the trans-Saharan trade, especially in slaves, and oriented Bornu's economy southwards towards the Guinea Coast and the rest of Nigeria. In 1914 they quietly, and with practically no incident, took over the Northern Cameroons from the Ger-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

mans and ruled it after World War I as a League of Nations Trust Territory, (later a U.N. Trust Territory) which meant in practice that it was part of the administrative responsibility of the colonial officials in Northern Nigeria. To appreciate more clearly what changes were brought about by colonialism, however, it is necessary to understand something of the social, economic, and in particular the political structure of Bornu, as it developed during pre-colonial times, and it is to this task that the remainder of the chapter is devoted.

Kanem-Bornu: The Social and Political Background

Only the sketchiest oddments of information are available about the nature of Kanem society. One Arabic record speaks of its capital as a city of tents, and traditions tell of a "Council of Nobles" that had a great deal of power over decision-making by the king, or Mai as he was called. From this and a few other data, such as the emphasis placed on the clan membership of persons mentioned in the early periods of the dynastic lists, we can attempt a reconstruction that fits the facts. The early kingdom seems to have been made up of patrilineal, named clans under senior or noble lineages (also named) whose heads formed the so-called "Council of Nobles" under the king or Mai. The Mai himself was head of the senior lineage of a senior clan considered to be the most important or powerful in the region. In all probability the term "Mai" or "king" was used for all leaders of clans just as it is today among some of the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of the Sahara to the north of Lake Chad who are closely related to the Kanuri. It also appears that the great Kanuri king lists are just what local people say they are—lists of the leaders of the Magumi Sefuwa or Sefuwa lineage heads of the Magumi clan. People in the clan considered themselves related by ties of descent to a common ancestor; but they could not describe the exact link with him, while they could describe the genealogical ties through men that made them all Sefuwa. Very probably these people utilized both cattle and domesticated plants although their early city of tents, referred to by Arabic historians, also suggests a greater emphasis on nomadism and the use of cattle. This is consistent with the clan organization described above; indeed this form of organization is widespread among nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples in the Sahara, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Arabia. Later, as attested by the ruins at Garamoulé northwest of Lake Chad they probably built more permanent settlements and very likely used slaves from the south of Lake Chad as trade goods and as agricultural laborers.

How centralized and developed the early stages of the Kanem state really were is an intriguing and difficult question and one that can be solved only by extensive historical and archaeological research. Certainly concepts of statecraft from Islamic areas to the north of the desert and trips by Kanem monarchs to Mecca would have acquainted the rulers with the ideas of very highly centralized states. How much this actually affected Bornu is unknown, although it is possible that tensions over the power of the central monarch were another reason for the civil strife which led eventually to the migration of the Sefuwa from Kanem to Bornu.

After the Sefuwa set up their kingdom in Bornu the state became a much more highly organized and centrally controlled political system. The people who

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

came to Bornu—and who also came to be called Kanuri about this time—were the Sefuwa, their fellow Magumi clansmen and loyal followers, clients and slaves. The traditions declare that the leader who finally founded the new capital of Birni Ngazargamo curbed the power of his own nobles and insisted that all of them (except one who protected the western boundaries) should live in the capital, leaving subordinates to administer their fief-holdings.[7] It should also be remembered that this newly formed Bornu kingdom (*ca.* 1450–1550 A.D.) tried to regain control over Kanem and many of its other lost vassal territories in the Chad Basin and the southern desert. Thus they very quickly attacked and defeated Bilma 400 miles to the north of Lake Chad which was the center for the Saharan salt trade. They also had to defend the kingdom against raiding desert Tuareg and the rising power of Songhai in the west.

Kanem was a state organized around a confederacy of clans, with one clan and its leading lineage having a senior status. The migration of this leading group into Bornu helps to explain why the Bornu kingdom was more centralized than its predecessor as a political system. In Bornu the Magumi Sefuwa had no other related clan or clan leaders to share power with; instead they were confronted by a group of pagan peoples spoken of under the general term of "So" in the traditions. Against these people they fought battles of conquest to establish their rule in the area and in the end absorbed many of them into a group known today as the Kanuri. It would have been much simpler to unify this one group under a leader who had no rival clan or clan leaders to cope with. Thus the new situation in Bornu afforded both a stimulus and an opportunity for increased centralization of power in the political organization of the Kanuri state. It is against this growing centralization in the hands of the ruling monarch of Bornu that the following account of its structure should be gauged, for it is not always easy to portray change and development while describing how a society is organized.

Pre-nineteenth Century Bornu

At the head of the early Bornu state was the Mai or king. This office was hereditary in the male line, and all men whose fathers had been monarchs were eligible for the succession. The Council of Nobles, and accounts vary as to who these were, chose the new monarch upon the death of the reigning one, although powerful rulers could obviously affect the choice. The royal office carried with it an aura of untouchability, remoteness, and sacredness. People referred to the Mai as "Master" using the term applied by slaves to their owners. People approached the royal cage in which the Mai was seated and prostrated themselves before the bars putting sand on their heads or going through the motions of doing so to indicate the humility and respect they felt in his presence.

Members of the royal family held titled offices. These included the monarch's own mother, his senior wife, and often a senior female relative, either a sister, half-sister, or more distant female relatives in the male line. The sons and

[7] A fief is a political unit within a state over which a superior has rights of tribute collection and political leadership (not necessarily exclusive rights) given to him by his or his ancestors' relationship to a monarch.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

daughters of sovereigns were the princes and princesses of the realm. Princesses were often given in marriage by the king to create alliances between the throne and other states, or nobles, or as rewards to trusted followers. Often, one among the princes was designated Chiroma or heir apparent. However, there was no hard and fast rule that the Chiroma either had the title for life, or that having been graced by the title its holder automatically succeeded to the throne. Although there was no special term for royal granddaughter, a king's grandsons who might become princes, if their fathers obtained the throne, were referred to by a special term.

Attached to the royal household by bonds of strict loyalty and obedience were the king's followers, some of whom lived in the palace, while others lived nearby. These, known as Koguna, together with members of the royal family and their followers provided the basis for the nobility of the state. They were of two main types—slave and free—with slaves being divided into ordinary slaves and eunuchs. The slaves originated from the slave trade or from raids made among pagan groups, or from the sons and daughters of slaves. The free nobility came from deroyalized segments of the royal family as it expanded through time and from descendants of nobles. This nobility was the source of personnel for the bulk of the administrative activities of the state. They served as the monarch's personal bodyguard, as messengers, military commanders, tax collectors, trusted spies, praise singers, slave raiders, consuls, and foreign emissaries. From their ranks came the people who bore the major titles of the state. Some of the titles were derived from Islam; others came from earlier times in Kanem or Bornu history. Although much changed in their nature, a number of these have survived to the present day.

In order to administer the kingdom, titled nobles, including the titled women of the royal family, were given fiefs equivalent to what are today village area units. All such holdings were fragmented and dispersed so that no one noble had control over any large portion of the state. The fief holdings varied in size and number per noble and were a measure of the political success of that particular noble at any point in time. The one exception was the Galidima. The holder of this title maintained a large consolidated set of village areas on the western boundary to protect the east-west trade and guard the western approaches to the capital city. The fief-holders raised militia for the monarch and taxes for themselves and the monarch. They also served as an appeal court system for the local people when they wished adjudication at higher than the local level. Thus people could obtain a royal audience by going through the fief hierarchy. The Kanuri also used the widespread Sudanese practice of dividing the kingdom into quadrants based on the four cardinal directions. Over each quadrant was a highly trusted follower of the king who could oversee the administration of his own quadrant, raise direct royal tax levies, and serve as an alternative form of hierarchy between the people and their ruler. The system functioned in this way as a check on the power of fief-holders, since the king could take fiefs away and redistribute them if there was sufficient reason for doing so. Through their own subordinates these quadrant leaders also administered the nomadic peoples of the kingdom who could not be easily worked into the administration of the fief system based as it was on settled populations. Two of the four leaders were always eunuchs, making for an automatically free power of appointment by the monarch, since these men had no heirs. The other two were always chosen from among the king's closest associates, although there was also a

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

175 642 631 634 tendency for these two titles to be passed on down the male line. Even in this latter case, however, the king could always choose those most likely to be totally loyal to his administration from among the heirs, or even disregard the hereditary rule if he wished and give the title to some other person. The four quadrant leaders also had their own fiefs which they used as the basic support for their large household organizations in the capital.

175 648 Vassal groups and territories paid tribute in kind through their leaders to the treasury of the Mai of Bornu. In the heyday of Bornu during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries these vassals included a large number of surrounding peoples in what is now Northern Nigeria, Niger, and Chad. These subordinate groups were organized in two ways. In the first instance a Bornu consul was appointed to reside in the tributary state to help collect annual tributes and administer the government. This was in effect a kind of conquest and occupation used most often in adjacent and nearby territories. The second method was to leave the territory under the control of its own leaders after they had pledged their loyalty and their intention to pay tributes and give military support to Bornu whenever necessary; they were also expected to provide safety and hospitality to expeditions and caravans going to and from Bornu. Some of these vassal states were caught between two great powers. Such a case were the Hausa of northwestern Nigeria. Caught as they were between Songhai to the west and Bornu to the east they, therefore, paid tributes in two directions, always hoping that someday they could be relieved of these burdens by an increase in their own power or a decrease in the power of one or both of their overlords. Indeed Bornu traditions and written records are almost totally concerned with expeditions against reluctant tributaries who were remiss in the payment of their tributes. On the other hand, there are also accounts of tributary states sending to Bornu for help against external enemies and internal revolts; so the relationship could, and often did, work to the advantage of both the conqueror and the conquered.

175 793 692 The religious and legal life of the state was strongly influenced by the specialized religious practitioners who were steeped in the Koran and Islamic jurisprudence. The chief judge and religious leader of early Bornu was given the title of Talba and is referred to in traditions as "second to the king," or the next in authority to the monarch himself. He and his descendants and client followers knew the Arabic script and thus made up a literate group closely associated with political leaders as scribes, legal advisers and religious functionaries. These men sat in on judicial hearings and advised political leaders who adjudicated on the basis of their own knowledge of the law. Besides the Mai, most noble households kept such religious men within their compounds for similar purposes, and as instructors for the children. Under such conditions the religious leaders were also strong supporters of the state and its power structure.

175 651 Little is known of the details of taxation for the early Bornu kingdom although records are much better for the nineteenth century system. Obviously some form of tax was levied on local fiefs by fief-holders as well as by the monarch who also received tributes from vassal states and a major portion of booty from warfare. As we have already noted, it is fairly evident that royal taxation of the Bornu population itself was carried on through the efforts of the monarch's titled followers who held powers of royal taxation privilege in the four quadrants of the state.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MC14

ing arms. A wife or female slave often accompanied each man to cook for him. But local townspeople were also expected to supply the army with food when it passed through their territory. However, it was preferred that the army be self-sufficient even to the point of digging their own wells. Discipline obviously posed some problems since the records indicate that at times army morale was low, especially during long, arduous campaigns. However, it picked up very quickly when the prospect of booty was in evidence.

The Nineteenth Century Kingdom

From the beginning of the nineteenth century our records and understanding of Bornu society increased enormously mostly because of the availability of excellent first-hand accounts such as those by Denham and Clapperton in the 1820s, Barth in the 1850s, and Nachtigal in the 1880s. When put together with the oral traditions these accounts fill out a fairly complete picture of Bornu society during the last century.

In the early part of the century Bornu political life was complicated by a fiction. The ancient Sefuwa rulers were still holding court while the Kanembu Shehus were in strict control of the state. This meant that many of the ancient titles lost their meaning because their functions were taken over by members of the Shehu's following. For example, the title of Kaigama, associated traditionally with leadership of the army while on a campaign, was dropped. Instead the Shehu used the title of Kachella, which had previously meant a slave follower who bears arms. Under the Shehus, Kachellas became powerful leaders of armed regiments of their own followers, the size of each Kachella's force being an indicator of his power and rank. At the same time the idea of raising military levies from fiefs was not dropped. Nevertheless the structure had changed, for now the Shehus used Kachellas and their permanent armed following as the military core of the state. Much later in the century, after the collapse of the Sefuwa dynasty, the title of Kaigama or war leader reappeared and was applied to the most powerful of these Kachella. In other words, a number of the old titles of Bornu could not be used in the nineteenth century, since at its beginning these titles were still associated with the old dynasty and its ancient court.

Although titles were varied to some extent, and new ones connected to the names of loyal followers of the Shehu appeared during the double regency, the Shehus organized their governmental administration in somewhat the same manner as that of the earlier Bornu state. The idea of the four quadrants atrophied while the old quadrant leaders remained under the ancient dynasty; and, as in the case of the war leader, these titles were not utilized until the old dynasty had been done away with. They were then absorbed into the general hierarchy of titles of those closely associated with the Shehu. However, the general idea of administering through quadrants was never used again. The Shehu's court met every day to discuss state matters and adjudicate cases when necessary. The Shehu sat on a raised dais and behind him in a semi-circle sat the male members of the royal family who were eligible for the throne. Sitting facing one another in two parallel lines in front of the group were nobles of the realm, slave and free, except for the Galidi-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

ma, who when he was in court, sat in front of the throne facing the same way as the Shehu between the two lines. This symbolized his semi-independent status as a holder of a large section of the kingdom rather than a set of fragmented fiefs. Thus the idea of a consolidated set of fief-holdings on the western boundary was maintained. There was a constant threat from the Fulani which made such a move politically expedient.

How much actual power this nineteenth-century court actually had is debatable. Obviously a few favorite advisers who had the ear of the monarch could become very powerful men during the period of their favor. However, who these were seems to have varied throughout the century. Indeed even a place in court might be gained by a very ambitious rural chief, if he appeared often enough and was able to please the monarch by his service and tributes. In the realm of the judiciary some significant changes occurred as well. Before the nineteenth century, as we have already noted, there was a chief judge, the Talba, who was ranked as "the second man" in the state. During the double regency at the beginning of the century, the first Shehu, Laminu, acted as his own chief judge. He was steeped in Koranic learning and is supposed to have had magical powers that enabled him to adjudicate even the most difficult of cases, harshly but with justice. Parenthetically, this power—and not his military acumen and leadership—is considered by the traditions to have been the chief reason why Laminu saved Bornu from the Fulani wars. Later in his rule, sometime in the 1820s, Shehu Laminu appointed two leading religious personages who came from the families of the leading Bornu religious practitioners to the new offices of Liman and Imam. The former took over the major duties of chief legal adviser to the Shehu, while the Imam became the chief religious practitioner in the state. The old Talba stayed with the court of the former dynasty, and after its demise the title became a lesser one in the judicial hierarchy which is where it stands today.

Punishments for misdemeanors were relatively harsh by contempory standards. Adultery on a Muslim holy day could bring 400 lashes to a man or 200 to a woman. It was believed that judges in the capital of Kuka actually set spies upon the populace in search of law breakers. Intentional murder was punishable by death, and the relatives of the dead man carried out the execution by stoning the murderer. Thieves who were repeatedly caught finally had a hand cut off or were tortured by being buried up to the neck, then having their heads buttered or honeyed and exposed above the ground to attract insects. Unpaid debts proven in court resulted in the confiscation of all the debtor's movable property and a fine to the court. The debtor was pinned to the ground by court officials until he consented to confiscation. However, if he obviously had no means at all, the judge dismissed the case with the words, "God send you the means."

All titled officials and even untitled followers of the Shehu could be given or they could inherit, at the pleasure of the Shehu, rights of revenue collection and administration in one or more settlements spread throughout the entire state. These fiefs were granted by the Shehu, nominal owner of all the land in the state. Generally speaking such rights were hereditary in the male line, but the Shehu could diminish or expand the holding of one fief-holder at the expense of another, and a new monarch was expected to patronize his own favorites. Any person holding a fief directly from the monarch was called a chima kura or "the big lord." There

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

175 634 642 643 421 were two types of differently named fiefs, the one where membership was territorially based, and the other where membership was ethnic or clan based, that is, based on birth into a particular group regardless of its territoriality. The big lord remained in the capital and administered his various fiefs, sometimes ranging up to twenty or more through his representative, the chima gana, or "the junior lords." Each junior lord lived in one of the fiefs of his superior, the fief-holder, or big lord. This junior lord was the highest authority living in the fief and from him one could appeal to the Shehu, being presented by representatives of the junior lord to the big lord living in the capital, and through this latter person to the court of the monarch.

175 634 622 This central administration was linked up to a local one. There was a village head, or buliama, who usually belonged to the male line of the founder of the settlement. However, he was only one among a group of eligibles. If the local junior lord did not like him or the tributes he delivered, then the junior lord could appoint another member of the same line. There are also some records of junior lords shifting the headship to other lineages as well as to persons within the same lineage. As settlements grew in size, sons, clients, and even slaves of the original village head would hive off and form small settlements or satellite communities nearby under the general jurisdiction of the original village head and the local leadership of the founder of the satellite community. These new heads were called mbarma (hamlet heads) as were heads of sub-sections of the original village that had some sort of unity based on occupation or kinship or a combination of both.

175 634 Thus a big lord with the help of his junior lords could have his fief-holdings expand in size, and he tried to help this process along by not being too excessive in his demands on the peasants, and by protecting them from raiders and other forms of outside depredation. A big lord's wealth and ability to supply militia to the monarch depended upon his success as a fief-holder, so that it was in his best interests to see to it that each fief was well governed. People could complain to other nobles, or emigrate out of the fief, and such indications of mismanagement, if they continued, could lead to the granting of fief rights to someone else. This new big lord could then take over part of the original holding, or in extreme cases the entire fief was transferred to another big lord's administration.

175 622 632 634 642 643 A very successful village head—one with a large and flourishing settlement containing many satellite communities—could be rewarded for his increase in power and authority by being brought to the Shehu's court in the capital and given the title of lawan. The Shehu then performed a ceremony in which a turban was placed on the new lawan's head. This meant he was now a member, albeit a local one, of the titled nobility of the state. In this case, he not only paid accession-to-office-gifts to the junior and senior lord which all local headsmen did, but to the Shehu as well. Once having been advanced from bullama to lawan, it was now possible for some of the leading heads of satellite villages to be made into bullama (by the junior lord and the lawan) with their own mbarma or leaders of satellite communties under them in turn. If these inter-related communities developed even further, the lawan might be brought into the capital again and be made officially into an ajia by the Shehu, giving bullama and mbarma under him the opportunity of becoming lawan with bullama and mbarma in turn under them, all under final authority of the ajia and the most senior of the junior lords. By this time the big

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

By the time the big lord living in the capital would have appointed several representatives to this particular fief because it had grown so big. Such fiefs were the ones most likely to fall prey to sub-division at the death of a king and appointment of a new one. For at this time the incoming monarch had to reward his chief supporters with grants of new fiefs.

As in the pre-nineteenth century the political hierarchy served as an appeal court system, and at the very top of the local fief hierarchy the junior lords shared adjudication with the most senior local leader whatever his rank. Usually these very senior political leaders of the fief had koranic scholars, or mallams, who gave legal advice. Serious cases such as homicide were referred immediately to the capital.

The other variety of fief, that based on birth into a particular group, or *jili* is less well understood. The word "jili" refers to variety or kind. The people speak of this or that jili of soil, or tree, or person. In using it to refer to a person they give his territorial or settlement background, or ethnic group, or his clan grouping if this differs from his territorial classification. Thus a person can have several jili —ethnic, territorial, or clan. Even patrilineal lineage affiliation can be described under this term. Nomadic groups in Bornu were represented as jili in the Shehu's court by a big lord of the jili (chima kura jilibe); this man was, in effect, the fief-holder responsible for the nomad group. Sometimes he was a leader of the group itself, and at other times he was a trusted Kanuri follower of the monarch. In both cases the big lord of the jili administered the group through his own representative in the group who was, unlike the territorial grouping, the local leader of a nomad clan, or a sub-tribe. Sometimes entire tribal groupings came under one jurisdiction, and at other times or in other sections of the state the tribe would be broken down into subsections based on clan groupings with one or more clans under a single fief-holder or big lord of the jili.

This double fief system allowed the nineteenth-century Bornu government the organizational means of administering both the settled and nomadic populations of Bornu. It also did something else very important, for it allowed the government effective control over the population even when natural disasters such as outbreaks of disease or sudden invasions sent the people into flight. If a large set of settlements had grown up in one territory from an original one, and this area was then beset by some disaster, which made the people flee in several directions, they were still thought of as a jili or a single variety of persons. They were still organized under their old lords, and their old leaders still retained over them some powers of taxation and demands of loyalty. If the entire kingdom was in an uproar —as it was during the Fulani wars at the beginning of the century with people fleeing in all directions—then old leaders, or former leaders, could muster their scattered followers as jili, and the political integration of the kingdom remained intact and viable until new settlements stabilized locally, and the territorial-based fief system could re-assert itself.

Complicating the system was the settlement of groups with fiefs through permission granted by the big lord in the capital. He could be approached by the leaders of a group of craftsmen, or kinsmen, or people of the same ethnic extraction, who requested of him that they be allowed to settle in one of his fiefs. In this case, the special group was directly under the jurisdiction of the lord through his local administrator, the junior lord, who dealt with their headman. In later generations,

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

In later generations they often became a separate fief, or in some cases were absorbed into the territorial organization of the original fief. Again, the big lord might also settle some of his slaves in the fief, or he might ask to settle them in someone else's fief, or be asked by some other high ranking person if he would allow slaves to be settled in one of his own fiefs. Slaves delivered the results of their work on the land, and in craftwork directly to their own master whether this was the big lord of the fief or not. If they were in someone else's fief, presents were sent by their master to the senior fief-holder—the big lord—in the capital. It was also possible for the monarch or the big lord to settle holy men, men learned in the Koran, on a fief and such settlements were generally tax free.

There were two main taxes and innumerable smaller ones. Indeed, in the Kanuri language it is possible to denote the meaning of taxation, a tax on something, by simply adding the suffix "ram" to the activity or the object. Of the two main annual taxes, collected after the harvest, one went to the fief-holder and the other to the Shehu. The big lord collected tax on the basis of assessment of local produce by a special tax messenger who went out to the fief and after conferring with local leaders agreed on the tax. All who cooperated in tax collection kept some for themselves, passing surpluses on up the hierarchy to the big lord. In turn the fief-holder always gave gifts to the ruler upon receipt of their own fief-holder tax. Each year the Shehu appointed his own tax messengers from among the nobility and collected a royal tithe from the various fiefs. These men might and might not be fief-holders in their own right, but very often they were not collecting in their own fiefs. Other taxes were annual fees to local headmen, fees for clearing new land, for using new market space, for adjudication, for craftwork, for irrigation (where present), for extending any kind of privilege, etc. The system was essentially the same for the nomad groups, but one related complication should be noted. The people from dispersed localities owed some small taxation privileges to their previous headmen, even though they now lived in new settlements within new fiefs and were required to pay major taxes to their new settlement leaders.

One final point about the pre-colonial political system should be made. To understand such a kingdom it is necessary to keep distinct at all times the concept of a title from that of an office. The Kanuri kingdom had great rosters of noble titles that through time varied in number, numbers of holders per title, and the name of title. Some pre-nineteenth century titles such as the *Fufuma* or lord of the ancient capital city of Birni Ngazargamo dropped out of use. There were a number of men entitled Shettima while there was only one Digma or one Yerima. The titles are honorific, and even personal names which were attached to originally powerful households have become titles during Bornu's long history. Titles embellish a man' political duties, and even provide some opportunities for furthering his ambitions if their past history, or the activities of a title holder, enable him to manipulate the situation successfully for his own advancement. Offices on the other hand are positions in government giving the incumbent rights, duties, and obligations. An office may almost completely coincide with the title, as in the case of the ancient monarch whose title was Mai for probably a thousand years, and Shehu for the last century and a half. Or again offices can vary independently of titles. Thus the title of Digma which was held by a man with many official duties and much power in the mid-nineteenth century had changed by the end of the century, and the man

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

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The Political Organization

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THE POLITICAL LIFE of Bornu ties togther the entire society into one overall unit so that it has an identity. As far as we know this has been the case for centuries and still is today, so that, although the Kanuri people see themselves and their society as many things, they view it primarily or basically as a political entity. To the people who live there Bornu represents a culture, a language, an ancient history, but more than anything else it represents a kingdom, or sovereign realm whose definition is political. Thus whether anyone belongs to it or not, and how one should behave within its boundaries depends first and foremost on its organization as a polity, that is, as a system in which there are recognized and legitimate means of distributing authority and making decisions at all levels of the society.

Authority distinctions are present in all organizations, and from this point of view all organizations have a political aspect. However, for our purposes it is easier to limit the discussion to the means by which decisions are made and carried out in those particular sectors of social life having some territorial or bureaucratic identity as sub-parts of the emirate government of Bornu. This excludes such things as trade groupings, like that of Ajimi's uncle described in the last chapter in which there is some hierarchy of authority, but which may not be, and often is not, located in one place. It also means that what we are discussing is a system, since each of its parts is clearly connected to the other to form a working whole. Like most other aspects of Bornu life, this system starts with the household as a basic particle and then builds onto it. It is a complicated and interwoven structure of an ancient, majestic, and yet contemporary kingdom whose stability and adaptability are monuments to men's striving for these illusive goals.

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Households, Wards, and Hamlets

As we have seen in Chapter 3 a household can expand and become a group of linked households under the superior authority of a senior man. When a young man, or a man's younger brother, or his apprentice or client, wishes to get mar-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

tury system of a flexible hierarchy described in Chapter 2 in which the number and authority of political offices can expand with the settlement size is still recognized and practiced.

In Magumeri village area one lawan is responsible for the administration of the entire area. All permanent residents in the area, when asked who their local leader is, reply, "We are the commoners of Lawan Mina. We are his people." This does not apply, or at least applies less, to those persons who live locally and are themselves higher in the political hierarchy than lawan or are local representatives of the emirate civil service departments. They have their own political superiors and are responsible to others besides the lawan. Thus they give their taxes to lawan because they live in Magumeri, and he must collect the village tax, but a dispute between one of these men and a peasant would be adjudicated at a higher level in the political hierarchy than that held by lawan.

In his own part of town the lawan acts as his own ward head. Many of the compounds in the ward are reserved for his own followers. In Magumeri this includes the lawan's own compound with his four wives, married son and grandchildren, several clients and his aged mother. Some twenty followers consider themselves the active supporters of lawan under his chief follower or *wakil*. Each of these men have their own compounds near that of lawan or at least in his ward. They receive economic aid from him in the form of food, clothing, and money as well as a recognized role as a member of his retinue. Peasants often ask one of these followers to intercede with the lawan on their behalf, or to help in arranging a meeting between parties to a dispute with the lawan as the judge.

This retinue of followers who are called collectively by a special name (*waladi*) are linked together under the lawan and serve as his administrative staff. They keep in touch with gossip, aid in collecting taxes, act as contact men for anyone wishing to see him, help him on his farm plots, and carry messages for him. When he travels, several of these men are always with him on horse and on foot, and give him the appearance of being what he is—a man a cut above the common citizenry of the village area—a local official of the kingdom whose title is conferred officially by the Shehu himself. Indeed today his is the lowest rung of the political hierarchy that is recognized as a salaried job in the emirate.

This entire administrative organization of the lawan can easily be discerned by asking the people of his ward whether they would move to another village if he were transferred or dismissed. There are quite a large number in the ward who would remain. These are not his followers but they do regard him as the leader of their ward and like everyone else in the emirate they see him as the official leader of their village area. They have seen several lawans come and go, and if this particular lawan were to continually overstep the limits of his authority, they would not be averse to making some complaints about him to his superiors. Thus their good will and support must be solicited by the lawan. Indeed such a check on his authority applies to all the people in the village area. Another check which any person in the area has over the lawan is the possibility of migration. Any person is free to move away from the village area into another whenever he wishes, and a serious migration out of some political unit weakens the leadership and is almost always interpreted as a sign of faulty administration by superiors in the emirate government.

If the lawan continued to adjudicate against him and gave him heavy fines, then he should request to take the case to a higher court. Thus the teacher wished his peasant-follower to make his peace with the lawan but if this were impossible, then higher authorities would be resorted to and the lawan's power bypassed. In other words the teacher felt that the political structure of the town should be respected but within limits.

Bukar's problem illustrates how a lawan can make reprisals when he feels that there has been some lack of recognition given to his authority by those under his administration. There are a large number of things in land matters, general disputes, ceremonials, divorces, default of bad debts, assault, housing, and commerce that come within his perview and intersect the lives of his people at a great many points and in many vulnerable ways. Therefore to thwart his authority and then remain within the orbit of his power without the possibility of reprisals would be impossible.

Recruitment to the office of the lawan is officially carried out by appointment from the emirate government at the capital. There is an official investiture ceremony at the capital, as in the nineteenth century, in which the lawan receives a turban from the Shehu of Bornu. In general there is a tendency, but only a tendency, for lawans to inherit the position. Thus one of the male heirs of the lawan takes over his household site and becomes the new lawan after his death. A male heir can be anyone in the male line of the lawan although sons seem to be favored. On the other hand many of the village areas have a history in which the office has gone to a number of men based on their particular relationship to the district head, the immediate superior of the lawan in the political hierarchy. Thus there is also a tendency for the lawan to be appointed from the ranks of the incumbent district head's followers so that the office also tends to shift from one agnatic descent group to another in relation to shifts in the person of the district head.

One other factor is important in the succession to a lawan's office. This has to do with the political allegiance of the lawan in the political hierarchy of Bornu emirate. If a lawan dies, or is dismissed, and he is not friendly to a new district head, then whether or not the district head attempts to replace him depends (a) on what are the lawan's political connections beyond that of his official superior, the district head, and (b) whether the new district head can procure the loyalty of the lawan and therefore enlist him into his own following. If a lawan has very powerful friends in the emirate, then the new district head could incur their wrath by getting the lawan out of office. A lawan is removed from his village area headship for a number of reasons although they can all be subsumed under three broad categories. First the political maneuverings of a district head who wishes to replace the lawan with his own followers. Secondly, excessive migration out of the village area, or complaints to higher officials by the peasants against the lawan, and thirdly, failure to raise enough taxes. These may, of course, be interrelated so that, for example, migration out of the village area would be spotted in the tax returns or by complaints resulting from the lawan's plan to cover up by taxing those who remain more than is bearable, thus bringing on complaints. However, if a lawan is responsive to his superiors, and does not mulct his peasants to the point of hardship, migration, and complaint, he has a fairly secure position in the Bornu political system.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

On the other hand the local official must work through the district head if he wishes to carry out his job successfully. Children are ordered into the district school through the district head's office. Forestry reserves are set up by his directive; cattle are rounded up by him. Indeed almost any action involving a response by the people in the district must come originally from the district head. A lawan, if approached for cooperation by civil service employees, would generally refuse to cooperate if he had not been first notified by the district head's office. The district head is a high official of the state while the native authority employee is generally the lowest status field representative of his department. Thus they pay the district head respect, stand up when he approaches them, take off their shoes before entering his compound, and consult him on programs they wish to have carried out in his district.

On his part the district head quickly establishes who the native authority officials are, and what families they come from or are connected to in the emirate. If the district head is closely connected by friendship and political alliance to a high-placed official in the local representative's department, then he may have an avenue of control over this local person through the latter's own superior. On the other hand the native authority employee may be connected with the powerful people in the emirate and the district head then knows that this particular official could possibly bring powerful forces into action if a situation warranted it.

The relationships of the district head to the capital are highly complex and result from the fact that he is the official link between the central government of the emirate and the local political organization of the district. Officially he is responsible to only one body, the central agency of the emirate government which is the Shehu-in-Council. This council, called the Bornu Native Authority Council, under the chairmanship of the Waziri or chief minister, is the highest authority in the emirate. As we noted in Chapter 2, the council acts like a cabinet and each member has a Native Authority department under his direction. District heads receive instructions about policy from the council and directives about programs from each of the departments. The district head delivers taxes to the Native Authority Treasury and must account for his actions to the council which has a major voice in appointing, dismissing, retiring, and transferring district heads from high to low-paying districts or vice versa.

Both during the colonial period and at the present, the Bornu Provincial Government has had several emirates under its jurisdiction, of which Bornu is the largest. Although not officially responsible to the Provincial Government, the district head and his work have always been inspected periodically by touring officers of the Provincial Government. These men can make recommendations which influence the emirate government and during colonial times there are a number of records of district heads being retired or dismissed because of the "advice" of Provincial Government officials. Thus the district head has to be sure his actions are in line with the demands and standards of provincial officials who are today generally from other parts of Northern Nigeria, and were, up to a few years ago, the British colonial officers.

The district head has other links with the capital as well. As we have already noted, he keeps a household in the palace ward of the capital city, and his followers in his compound under a wakil, or chief follower, visit the palace regu-

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

practically impossible since it meant rejecting your own superiors, not your job, and it would be similar to someone in a household saying he was fed up when he decided to leave. Thus in Kanuri cultural terms, changing a job means rejecting the people with whom one works, and young men claim they would be considered ingrates and trouble-makers if they were to attempt such a thing. Transfers, if they are to be accomplished at all, must be done through relatives and friends who can "visit at night" with the appropriate people and explain the ins and outs of the case so that things can be arranged on this personal basis first before any impersonal bureaucratic procedures are utilized.

On the surface the emirate civil service looks very westernized. There are offices, typewriters, clerks, officials, expense vouchers, committees, memoranda, telephones, employee organizations, etc. However within the service, traditional patterns of association are still very strongly observed. A man lifts the telephone and traditional greetings and modes of address to a superior flow forth and color the conversation. People leave their shoes outside a superior's office, and so on. Under these superficial cultural acts there are other things as well. "Big men" (senior officials) have large compounds linked to a number of clients who live either in their households or close by. Some of these subordinates have positions in the civil service. Others form part of this big man's own group of followers; he must be approached through this group and he uses it to maintain his position and prestige in the state. It is also important to understand that the western concept of loyalty to an ideal of public service is not widespread as yet. Top leaders are committed to the maintenance of order in a just society that is becoming more modern. Within the Native Authority, department loyalties are to one's superiors and personal advancement is through loyalty and generalized obedience, just as it always has been in Kanuri society, and not to an abstract ideal of public service and bureaucratic efficiency. This does not mean that rationalized bureaucratic behavior will not become more common in Bornu. Indeed everything we know about modernization suggests that this is inevitable. However, it does mean that at present the society is not divided into strict sectors, one labelled modern or western, the other traditional. Instead, each of these permeates the other so that everything new and modern is shot through with traditional culture, and everything traditional has aspects of the modern.

Representative Government

For most intents and purposes the political organization of the emirate is carried out within the system of offices and agencies described above. However there are today the bare bones of some other kinds of organization that are quite likely to prove important in the future. During the 1950s and continuing on to the present time, each district has had a local district council. This body is made up of members from all over the district, sometimes the village area heads, sometimes people appointed by them. They meet only a few times a year for one or two days under the chairmanship of the district head and discuss local affairs. These meetings are generally attended as well by members of the departments of local government from the capital. The councils have a budget based on a small proportion of

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

the taxes raised in the district and they meet primarily to discuss the dispensation of these funds. Usually this has to do with items of local improvement such as market stalls in various villages in the district, radios for hamlets and villages, etc. They also draft resolutions asking the emirate government for help in extending roads, building wells, and so on.

The official representative from the capital—previously from the colonial government, now the local government department of the emirate—who attends the meetings provides a link between this group and the central government in Maiduguri. He advises them on what is and what is not feasible in terms of their requests to the central government and also informs them of long-range development policies and plans by the central emirate government.

So far these councils are quite weak. They meet only a few times a year and have a very limited function. However as time goes on they could assume the role of a local legislative and administrative body made up of people who represent the developing needs of ordinary people to participate in decisions affecting their own local areas.

During the last decade or so another form of political activity has come to Bornu in the form of political parties. The traditional authorities, the district heads, lawans, judges, officials of the Native Authority, and all their followers, support the N.P.C. (Northern Peoples Congress) which represents similar interests in other parts of Northern Nigeria and forms the dominant element in the federal government of Nigeria. Several days a week in various parts of Maiduguri, but only rarely in rural areas, public meetings are held under the green flag of the N.P.C. Meetings are usually preceded by drumming and traditional dancing by divorced women. Then party organizers make speeches to the assembled crowds. Sometimes the "big men" such as the district heads or Native Authority Councilors attend these meetings especially around election time, but they themselves and candidates for office do not speak. To do so is considered demeaning for the "big men." Instead party organizers give long, loud harangues extolling the virtues of the N.P.C. and go into great detail about the evils propagated by other political parties in Nigeria.

The overall effect of these political meetings is one of tradition versus its breakdown, good versus evil, ethnic and religious unity and loyalty versus disunity and disloyalty. The real, everyday authority in the lives of the people obviously supports the N.P.C. Thus a vote against this party means much more than a simple political decision to support one contending group of leaders against another; it means that the person is turning against the traditional political structure of the society, and by inference that moral order that holds it together. Listeners at the meetings are constantly presented with moral choices; "are you against our own chiefs, the district heads, lawans, our Shehu?—well *they*, the opposition parties, are; are you against wives being obedient to their husbands?—well *they* are; are you against children being obedient to their parents?—well *they* are," and so on. Stories are told of people whose parents were fine and upstanding citizens who supported and were supported by their leaders. Then their children ran away and supported opposition parties having first rejected the authority, love, affection and support of their own parents. Such people are now vagrants with no families, no proper connections to a respectable Kanuri household, no place in society, and no proper place in the

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

665 208 [186] social and moral life of the community. It is prophesied that morality and family life as it is now known could be destroyed if opposition parties ever came to power. Finally, it is always pointed out that opposition parties represent the Southern Nigerians and that a vote for such a group is a vote against Islam, the true religion, and a vote for paganism covered by a thin cloak of Christianity.

665 175 578 648 [563] [579] During the 1950s when there was an active local opposition party in Bornu under a Kanuri leader, attitudes to the opposition were more clearly seen. The British colonial officials dealt mostly with senior Kanuri members of the Native Authority. Both the British and these Kanuri leaders had an abhorrence of disorder, riots, or activities that could lead to such disturbances. It was thought that allowing Southern Nigerians to organize branches of their own party locally was one thing but having a Kanuri opposition party was quite another. Events proved them correct, for in 1958 riots broke out in Maiduguri between supporters of the N.P.C. and the Bornu Youth League. The ins and outs of these riots need not concern us here, but from that time on the B.Y.L. was crushed. Many of its local leaders fled [167] to other parts of Nigeria or to neighboring Chad to reappear several years later and eventually to become loyal N.P.C. supporters. Today although other Nigerian parties are represented in Bornu, their supporters and local organizers are all non-Kanuri. Thus the emirate government is linked to Nigerian party politics through a one-party organization which represents the traditional authority system of the emirate.

665 648 The party and its place as a dominant element in Nigerian politics means that Kanuri leaders have open to them regional and federal appointments. There are Kanuri in the federal cabinet and in the various federal ministries. Up until January 1966, the political head of the N.P.C. and the Premier of the northern region was the Sarduana of Sokoto, and the Governor was Sir Kashim Ibrahim, the former Waziri of Bornu.[1] The old nineteenth century balance of power in this region between the empires of Bornu and Sokoto still remain, then, and both must be represented in the leading positions of this, the largest region of Nigeria.

642 105 178 In summary, Kanuri political organization is basically structured along the lines set up by the colonial era which were built onto those of pre-colonial times. As the emirate has developed a need for more modern political structures these have appeared and are continuing to appear as the society changes towards more modernization and the accumulation of social and economic development. Within this structure modes of behavior are still largely traditional as are the values and political ideology that give the present system its immediate and long range goals. Whether or not modernism and its values will eventually produce a clash with tradition or whether the change will continue to be as smooth and incremental as it has in the past is one of the key questions for the future.

[1] As this is being written the politics of Nigeria, and in all probability its constitutional make-up, are being changed by the effects of the military take-over of the federal government which occurred in January, 1966.

648 greatly since that time, as Nigeria is an independent nation today.

The policy of the British in Northern Nigeria had been one of indirect rule. In this manner, a small administrative staff was able to govern a huge area, and the chiefs and Emirs of the North remained the political rulers in their own areas.

631 Bornu Province is divided administratively into five Emirates,
612 though the Emirate of Bornu overshadows the remaining four in geographic area, population, and political importance. The Emirates of Bornu and of Bama are Kanuri. The Emirs of Fika, Biu and Gashua rule over three small tribes, discussed in the preceding section, which are within the sphere of Kanuri influ-
634 ence. In addition to the Emirates, the provinces of the North are divided into districts, and each district has an appointed native District Head. The large Emirates are made up of many districts; the small Emirates sometimes have no more than a single district. Bornu Emirate has twenty-one districts.

648 Although the British ruled through the existing political system in Bornu Emirate, they controlled all important policy decisions and they had brought about important changes in the political organization of the Kanuri in order to carry out their policies. The actual relationship between the British Resident, who was in charge of the province, assisted by his staff of District Officers, and the Shehu, his Waziri and the Shehu's Council, differed radically from that officially stated. Although the British administration claimed to be merely advisory, it was

648 the actual administrative power. The twenty-one District Heads
648 643 634 in Bornu Emirate were appointed by the Shehu, as was the Waziri, and the members of the Shehu's council. Although these appointments formally need not be approved by the British administration, in practice their approval was necessary.

634 175 631 178 [651] The system of District Heads replaced the feudal absentee landlords who controlled Bornu in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Many peasants still refer to their District Head as chima, the name for the feudal lord of former times, since one of the main functions of the District Head is the [329] collection of taxes. Although many commoners continue to view the system today much as their ancestors looked upon the political system during the days of the Bornu Empire, radical changes [642] had been brought about. Under the empire actions and decisions of the feudal lords were subject only to the disapproval of the [648] Shehu, the absolute ruler. Today a still larger political unit, the government of Nigeria, maintains a legal system which protects all citizens though they may not be aware of it. A Kanuri could appeal out of his own political system, and seek the protection of a British District Officer against the ruling of his own Village Head or District Head. Obviously such a move might have serious repercussions and not many individuals decided to take the step. Nevertheless, the alternative existed.

692 779 In accordance with the British practice of ruling through native institutions where possible, the formal legal system of Northern Nigeria continued to be Islamic law, more precisely

175 Kukawa while their slaves and subordinates administered their
565 lands and collected taxes. Slaves of the Shehu could them-
631 selves be chimas, and in fact some of the highest titles--
[567] those of Kaigama (a general of the army), and Mastrema (a
[554] eunuch) were reserved for slaves of the Shehu.

175 The "knights" of the Shehu were titled lords, who served
631 as his kabuna. Each lord also had his own kabuna, who vowed
565 allegiance directly to him. The kabuna of the lord actually
567 administered his lands while he lived in the capital. Many of
them were his slaves, but just as slaves of the Shehu could
themselves be powerful nobles, so too slaves of a lord who
were his kabuna were powerful individuals in the villages under
[632] the jurisdiction of their lord. From his kabuna the lord se-
[627] lected the most trustworthy and rewarded them by having them
appointed town heads (Lowan), or to a lesser extent village
heads (Bulama). The Lowan of a town was directly involved in
administering his town, in adjudicating disputes through arbi-
tration and in collecting the property tax (haraji).

634 It was said that the chima was almost the absolute author-
173 ity in his lands. If he saw a horse that he wished to have or
• 642 a woman whom he admired, he could have them simply by indicat-
ing that he wanted to possess them. No man would refuse him
[643] directly. However, if reports came to the Shehu that a chima
was acting irresponsibly the Shehu could reprimand the man,
175 and could even remove his title from him. Any man could ap-
643 peal directly to the Shehu for justice. The power of the Shehu
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175 643 642 was indeed absolute. Only the advice of his Imam or of his Koranic Malams might sway or alter his decisions, but this was no more than advice. It might be pointed out to him that a particular course of action was counter to the writings of the Koran, and he might ignore the advice at his peril, but the ultimate decision was his.

2. The Political Organization of the Empire in the Twentieth Century.

175 648 642 178 In 1893 the empire of Bornu suffered what seemed to be the final blow. An army under the leadership of Rabeh, a follower and foster son of Zubeir Pasha of the Sudan, defeated the army of the Shehu of Bornu, overran the empire, and for seven years subjected it to their plunder. In 1900 the French captured and killed Rabeh. Two years later the British entered Bornu. Their first act was to restore the line of the Shehus to the throne. Thus, the empire of Bornu was perpetuated by the colonial powers, though itself unable to resist attack successfully. Restoration by the British brought about a continuation and revival of the old political organization which persists into the present. Through this structure, with some additions and modifications, the British ruled for 58 years in Bornu.

175 648 634 178 From the point of view of the Kanuri villager, the political system under the British was hardly different from that under which his father had lived before the coming of Rabeh. The British did away with the chimas, replacing them with District

175 Heads or Ajias. The only important difference between the two,
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648 from the point of view of the Kanuri farmer, is that the Ajia
634 lived in the capital of his District, while the chima lived in
[642] Kukawa. There were, in fact, great differences between the two, because the British Resident ultimately controlled all policy decisions at the upper levels. But the Kanuri villager knew little of this. It is striking to note how many of the District Heads in 1956-1957 were the heads of the same noble families from which the chimas of the last century were chosen. The British, with or without knowing it, had kept the aristocratic families in positions of political power, at the same time preserving the old political structure of the empire.

175 The Ajias, in their turn, have kept their own kabuna to
634 help them in administering their districts. From their kabuna
632 they have selected the most trusted to serve as Lowans. Since many of the Ajias came from the nobility, they had many slaves whom they inherited from their fathers. These were frequently their most trusted kabuna, though not all kabuna are slaves. Many of the Ajias are slaves of the Shehu, and many of the Lowans are slaves of the Ajias. Ajia and Lowan alike settle disputes, and collect taxes, their two most important functions.
[692]
[651]

C. Religion

779 The Kanuri are Moslems. Islam entered Bornu in the elev-
[175] enth century, and since that time has spread throughout the entire Kanuri population. Unlike the Hausa, where a large part

175 554 565 are individual titles which can be held by only one man at a time. There can be only one Kaigama, one Mastrema, and one Yerima at any given time. A man's son did not invariably inherit his father's title at his father's death. The title was conferred by the Shehu, customarily to the son of the previous title holder. If there were several sons, the one whom the Shehu judged most worthy was given the title; and if a title-holder had no sons, or no sons worthy of holding a title, the title might be given to anyone, though it was almost always given to someone of the household of the title-holder. There are several interesting cases of high titles given to talaka who were members of a household (the present holder of the title Talba is a slave who was given the title because there were no sons of the previous Talba; a horse boy inherited the title of Kaigama in the past; the Malam to the family, and a member of the household, inherited the title of Yirima). A talaka who was considered worthy, and was a member of a household whose head held a title might inherit that title; a common talaka without appropriate household affiliations could never hope to receive a title in former times.

The title was the mark of nobility in Kanuri society, and the embodiment of the several dimensions which, when taken together determined social importance. The title was linked to the system of feudal chimas who paid allegiance to the Shehu and effectively governed the land. The chimas had power, subject only to review by the Shehu himself, over the people in

175 554 565 642 556 651 their lands; they had wealth because of their rights to tax the populace, as well as their access to large tracts of farm land worked by the populace for the benefit of their chima, and to labor in the form of tax payment to the chima. The chimas had prestige which rested in the noble title which they bore. But, 175 554 565 567 interestingly enough, it was not necessary to be free-born in order to be a chima, or in order to receive a title. A slave of the Shehu could himself occupy a position of enormous power as a titled chima, could be extremely wealthy, and would be respected as well as feared by the talaka, the free-born populace. 554 565 592 Lastly, it should be borne in mind that these attributes which determine social position are shared by an entire household, and not solely by one individual. It is true that only one man is granted a title, but he is the head of a large household. The more important the man, and the greater his title, the larger will be his household, including: number of wives, slaves, concubines, children given to him, and tata njima. These all share to an extent in the increased power and wealth of the titled household head. As his own position rises, his slaves and tata njima increasingly receive greater power and responsibility. They become his kabuna, collect taxes for him, administer the lands and eventually hope to be appointed Lowans, by which time they themselves will have large and important households.

However, there
565 were great wealth differences between different talaka groups.
556 Traders, artisans, and farmers exhibited enormous wealth dif-
554 ferences between them and, as would be expected, these wealth differences were reflected in the difference in size of household between different types of talaka. In the cities, wealthy traders and well-to-do artisans occupied large compounds along with the many members of their household; while non-specialized laborers, low-status artisans, hand-to-mouth tradesmen, and ordinary farmers lived with their nuclear families in small compounds and at a much lower standard of living.

55 With respect to relative prestige there were also great
792 differences between various types of talaka. The most prestigeful activities are associated with Islam. Piety and study of the Koran earn a man prestige. Devoting one's life to the study of the Koran, by becoming a Malam, earns one great prestige, though the Malam is dependent on charity and consequently can never be a wealthy man. At the top of the religious hierarchy there are individuals who may be powerful (since the Shehu is advised by his Malams) and wealthy, but these are exceptional individuals. Malams as a group enjoy great prestige, but little power or wealth.

4. Changes in the Stratification System.

648 At the time of the present study (1956-1957), Bornu was
642 under British colonial rule, so that although the structure
178 of the empire, with the Shehu at its apex, was still in exist-
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ence, British administrative officers made all final policy decisions. Since the system of social stratification finds its support in the political organization of the Kanuri state, and since that state is no longer the ultimate authority of the land, one might expect great changes in the social system today. While significant changes have been occurring, the old system of social stratification has been able to survive, in certain respects supported and bolstered by British colonial rule. It continues to shape Kanuri society today and to adapt itself to new conditions and new demands.

The Shehu and the royal family are still present, and the Shehu continues to wield political power. Though a British resident was the ultimate authority, he acted through the Shehu and the Shehu's council. In the eyes of the Kanuri people, the Shehu still was the symbol of the Kanuri state, though all Kanuri recognized that the White man (nasara) was present as super-authority.

Titled nobility are still present, and retain much of their political power since they still control the great majority of District Headships. It is striking to note how many Ajias, who replaced the chimas of old, are the heads of old noble families and the present holders of great Kanuri titles, both slave and free. The descendants of the chimas are the bulk of the Ajias, so it is not surprising that the talaka continue to view them as chimas and to use the term in referring to their present Ajia.

wished to have as the new Lowan, he replied that he was indifferent. The name of Kolo Kolo was then submitted to the town council, the only name submitted. Eight council members voted for Kolo Kolo as new Lowan; two wrote in other names. Kolo Kolo then became the new Lowan. He had been a resident in Geidam for twenty years before Yerima came to the town, and had been an important dilelma dealing in cows. Kolo Kolo is of the same family as Yerima's mother. When Yerima came to Geidam as Ajia, Kolo Kolo joined him as a kabuna, one of the more important kabuna. At the first opportunity he was made a Lowan. He is a good choice as Lowan as he has long been a resident of Geidam, and is acceptable to the townspeople. At the same time, he is a kabuna of Yerima's, and is completely devoted to Yerima, who made it all possible. Yerima bears no grudge against Lowan Kagu. He specifically states that if Lowan Kagu, who is still a young man, has learned from the experience and can demonstrate through his behavior that his attitudes have changed, he may well be appointed Lowan again, should a future opportunity arise. Indeed, it appears that Yerima would welcome this, were he assured of Lowan Kagu's loyalty to him, as it would smooth over old rifts and would restore Lowan Kagu to a position which had long been in his family and to which he was entitled.

The courts in Bornu are intended, theoretically, to operate independently from the political arm of government, and in particular to be free of all influence from the Ajias. The

174 133 80 miles of its bed in flood and boats being used in these seasonal swamps.(1) Carpenter feels that it was these wet lands south of the Fezzan rather than the Niger that Etearchus spoke of to Herodotus. It seems reasonable to suppose that as these enormous wet lands dried up central Saharan speaking peoples followed the course of this retreat and moved slowly over the centuries into the Chad basin, or at least concentrated more densely in this geographically favourable area.

175 Until more historical and archeological research has been carried out, it would be wise to neglect some of the later writers' fanciful reconstructions and to concur with the ever careful Barth, in speaking of the first centuries of the Kanuri kingdom as its "silent beginnings".(2)

175 797 Most scholars are agreed that the rulers of Bornu embraced Islam somewhere around the end of the 11th century. El Bekri writing circa 1067 A.D. speaks of the people of Kanem as idolaters.(3) However it is most likely that besides consulting merchants and travellers, he was consulting older [173] texts on the subject. The king lists all agree on the fact that Mai (king) Hume (1085-1097 A.D.) died in Egypt on the way to Mecca, and it is upon this evidence that Islam is at present dated in Bornu.(4)

[177] Urvoy feels that this contact with Islam brought with it the knowledge of expansionism, powerful monarchy, and the idea of tributaries.(5) Whether this is true, or whether Islam only enhanced tendencies

175 642 already present is impossible to say at present. Whatever the answer, it is recorded that the son of the above mentioned Hume, Dunama I (1097-1150 A.D.) expanded the little state of Kanem, northeast of Lake Chad, into

(1) Carpenter, Rhys, op.cit. p. 239.
(2) Barth, H. Travels in North and Central Africa, Vol.II (London) 1857, p. 643.
(3) El Bekri, quoted in Barth, H. op. cit., p. 634.
(4) Urvoy, Y. Chronologie du Bornu, Journal de la Société des Africanistes, 12, 2, 1942, pp. 271-289.
(5) Urvoy, Y. Histoire de l'Empire du Bornu, Mem. IFAN, 7, 1949, p.36

175 a large Empire with the result that Kanem became a well known state in
642 the Islamic world of the 12th century. By the 13th century, Kanem had
[131] extended itself to include a large region in the Chad basin, including present day Bornu, and more importantly was in control of the central
(1)
175 Sahara with its trade route to Tripoli. Friendship was contracted with
648 the Hafsid rulers of Tunis, and we are told by Ibn Said writing at this time that a giraffe was sent by the King of Kanem to the Sultan of Tripoli
[179] as a present. He further notes that the practice of Islam is widespread
(2)
amongst the population of Kanem at this time. Kachim Biri, the reigning monarch from 1242-43 A.D., ordered the construction of a traveler's house
(3)
for Kanuri pilgrims in the city of Cairo. At the other end of the Muslim world, in Spain, a poet from Kanem was employed at this period in the court of El Mansur (1190-1214) at Seville, to sing the Sultan's praises. We are told by Lady Lugard that early references describe this person as
(4)
a "learned and cultured poet, a black of the Sudan, Abu Ishah al Kanemi".

Although information on the internal affairs of Kanem is scarce for this period, these outward ripples indicate extensive contacts and peaceful relations between a well organized state and the rest of the Muslim world of the 12th and 13th centuries. Since the early Arabic travellers who came to Ghana, Mali and Songhai were often told of the existence of Kanem to the east, it can be assumed that contacts across the Sudan were
(5)
kept up and utilized as much as the northerly ones.

173 Local tradition in Bornu at the time of Barth's visit (1851)
669 explained the eventual collapse of the great empire of Kanem in an interest-

(1) Ibn Said writing of the rule of Dunama Ahmed (1221-1295 A.D.) says it included present day Bornu. Later writers claimed that Bornu reached to the Nile in this period. (See, Barth, H. op. cit.Vol.II, p. 641.)
(2) Urvoy, Y. op. cit., 1949, p. 369.
(3) Burckhardt, J.L., Travels in Nubia, (London) 1819.
(4) Shaw, F.L., (Lady Lugard), op. cit. p 65.
(5) See, Battutu Ibn, Travels in Asia and Africa, trans.H.A.R. Gibb (London) 1929.

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642 However, resuscitation was at hand. In the last part of the 15th century, the kingdom was reconsolidated by the 48th Mai, Ali Ghajideni (1472-1504 A.D.), who quelled the civil wars and restored some measure of peace between the high ranking officials, with himself firmly [103] in authority. He built a new capital, Birni Gazargamo on the river Yo [361] (Komadu'u Yobe), about half way between the present towns of Damasak and Geidam, on the border of Nigeria and French West Africa in Bornu Province. [648] His reign was marked by the re-conquest of the territory of Kanem, north- [721] east of Chad, the extension of Bornu hegemony into Borku and Tibesti in the north, and continual but indecisive warfare against the powerful empire 175 of Songhai in the west. It is also about this time that Bornu is first mentioned in the early European maps of Africa put out by the Portugese cartographers of the late 15th century. Mai Ali's reign was followed by a series of others no less notable, including that of Mai Idris Alooma, for whom we have a contemporary record written by his court scribe sometime around the beginning of the 17th century.(1) It is Idris who is supposed to have introduced the technique of burnt brick into the area. However, there is some doubt on this point for it is known that the Songhai king Mansa Musa brought back from his great pilgrimage a Granada poet and architect, Es Saheli, who built a mosque at Gao (200 miles due east of Timbuctu on the Niger) of burnt brick at the beginning of the 14th century.(2)

[721] When the second empire was founded at Birni Gazargamo, fighting increased against the So, a people with whom the Kanuri seem to have 174 fought continually throughout their history. A small digression must be made here in order to assess these often mentioned So people of the ancient traditions. These people are said to have been native to the Bornu

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua: History of the First Twelve Years of the Mai Idris Alooma, 1571-1583, by his Imam; trans. by H.R. Palmer, 1926.
(2) Bovill, E.W., Caravans of the Old Sahara. London, 1933, p. 73

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• 642 The political organization of the 19th century was almost completely overhauled by Rabeh. Fiefs were re-constructed with new boundaries and given to his own followers, while the old fief holders were often killed. But it should be stressed that complete chaos was not the rule of the day, as many writers have assumed. Rabeh was establishing a state under a new and alien leadership. It had been done by Laminu at the beginning of the 19th century, albeit with much less internal turbulence. It is most probable that had history given him the chance Rabeh would have founded the third dynasty of the Bornu empire and linked its relations much more closely to the east. It was European events that impaired the direction of this development. Rabeh's triumph and abortive attempt at empire building was cut short because in the European world the "scramble for Africa" had come to Nigeria and was rapidly closing in on the would-be king.

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127 The presence of a good sized literature on pre-British Bornu, including travellers's accounts, the extant collections of early Kanuri records, especially the historical writing of Ahmed ibn Fartua,(1) and the so-called "District Notebooks" of early 20th century British Colonial Officers who tried to reconstruct the pre-Rabeh political organisation and tax structure of Bornu, enable us to say something about the life of the Emirate in its pre-European period. To this list of sources can be added the oral traditions of contemporary Kanuri, especially some of the older men in and around the Shehu's court.

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642 Very little remains at present (besides the archeological material) to record the life of Bornu in the early pre-Muslim days of the

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua; op. cit.

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642 kingdom. It is probable that the early state was organized as a group of clans, with one clan and a lineage within it as the ruling group. There is the possibility that this dominant group was an intrusive one, but this point has been so over-stressed with no substantiating data by other writers, that it would be wiser to leave it until sufficient archeological research has been done.

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829 After the move to Bornu and the founding of the capital of Birni Gazargamo we have some contemporary data with which to assess the life of the times. Ibn Fartua expresses the feelings of a chief servant of the Mai concerning the ethical nature of the state in the 16th century. He says that " . . .every people relies on imitation of its leaders. The leader goes before and the people follow him. He leads them to the Garden as it were by a bridle, after giving the Book of Direction, glad tidings about the Faith, right direction, and sure guidance in the path of law. So every man knows his rights and his obligations to others. Most excellent is the fame of just deeds, and justice on the part of a Mai for one day is equal to service of God for sixty years . . . A place where there is an evil Mai is better than a place which has none." (1) Thus the structural position of the Mai is extolled as being even more important than its functions, for when a leader is present every man knows his relationship to other men, and the people are enjoined to feel blessed at the fact of political leadership per se.

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631 The political organization of Bornu during the second florescence of the kingdom was structured outwards from the capital at Birni Gazaragamo with the cardinal directions of the State under the military protection of four titled noblemen. The south was under the Yurema or chief eunuch; the north was held by the Mustrema (also a eunuch); the east by the Kaigama (a

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua, op. cit. pp.10-11.

175 631 [173] Local traditions are fairly unanimous in attributing continuity to this system of fiefdoms when the dynastic power changed hands at the beginning of the 19th century. Gradually the state began to be organised as it was of old, before the Fulani attacks, although now the fiefs were distributed amongst the family, courtiers, slaves and eunuchs of the Shehu.

175 631 642 An early British report in Bornu indicates some of the dynamic qualities of the fief system as it operated in pre-British Bornu.(1) Tomlinson found that from 1893 to 1900 Rabeh had reduced the number of fiefs and for the most part placed them under his major lieutenants.(2) Being a stranger in a new land Rabeh had to keep his control as tight as possible and rely on a few trusted followers. Therefore the number of fiefs were reduced. Alternatively, when the Shehu was re-instated by the British and asked to help create "Districts" out of the old fiefs, he attempted to make as many of them as he could in order to obtain as large a body of followers as possible to consolidate his power.

173 634 [562] Although there is no mention made in any of the sources on Bornu, Kanuri informants claimed that the Chima Kura had the right to sell a fief if he so desired. Titled women were also given fiefs which were, as in the case of a male fiefholder, managed for them by slaves or servants in residence at the fief.

173 651 The pre-British taxation system is remembered as consisting of two separate levies. One, the binèmram collected in binèm (winter) was the property and organizational responsibility of the Chima Kura who owned the fief. Taxes were collected in kind at the local peasant level. The

(1) Tomlinson, F.J.P. Report of Mguanzei District; 1918, in Prov. Office Maiduguri, Bornu, Prov. Nigeria.

(2) In a few cases, when the old Kanuri fiefholders declared allegiance to Rabeh, they were allowed to retain their fiefs. This occurred in the case of the fief of Magumeri in the 1890's.

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721 since the absence of the local chief with a force of young men had tempted the neighbouring chief, or some wandering nomad raiders, to plunder the town for slaves and booty.

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642 When the British arrived in Bornu to weld the Emirate into their Colonial Empire, it should be emphasised that they were confronted by a way of life, whose known and partly recorded past had been flowing on through at least 1100 years of continuous, unbroken and independent national history. During that time the power of the monarchy had risen and fallen in successive waves of power and decline. In the 12th and 13th centuries the first Kanuri florescence occurred in Kanem, northeast of Lake Chad, only to decline in the 14th century and finally beat a forced retreat from the center of their empire into Bornu proper, to the west of the Lake. Here, to the south of the river Yo, they hoped for some safety from the northern raiders which was afforded by the river. The 16th and 17th centuries saw the second emergence of a Kanuri Empire in the Sudan, which, although often neglected by historians of the region, was effective enough to resist the eastward expansion of Songhai at the zenith of its power. Slow decline followed in the 17th and 18th centuries until a near collapse, due to Fulani expansionism at the beginning of the 19th century, could only be avoided by a new dynasty taking over the rule of the kingdom, which maintained itself and the kingdom until Rabeh's desecration of Bornu in 1893. However, even Rabeh was slowly beginning to reorganize the broken kingdom when the British arrived, and it is evident that the complete chaos, conventionally charged to Bornu at the beginning of the 19th century, has been over-emphasized. Forces of re-consolidation were in operation which would have kept the Bornu state in existence, albeit under a new dynasty.

It is evident from an appraisal of Kanuri history that its

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642 most useful institution, in terms of survival, was the organization of a feudal state. Under the king, the nobility had their own fiefs which validated their status in the state and insured their all-important military cooperation. It was indicated in the chapter that this kind of organization has been used historically in Bornu for incorporating entire tribes into the Kanuri state, if such was desirable.

The major point, however, is the legacy of the state organization which the historical development of Kanuri feudalism has maintained. [701] A well ordered and easily expandable war machine for the offensive and defensive policies of the state was a primary result of the feudal organ- [692] ization. Once these structural principles were in operation, taxation [652] and a hierarchical political and judicial system became possible and operative over a wide territory.

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439 The presence of a capital city with a large administrative and military class served as a stimulus for the specialization of labour. This body of people was an ever-ready market for the sale of surplus subsistence produce and a wide range of specialized manufactured materials of local and imported origin, which in turn stimulated trade and the development of the market from the very earliest days of the kingdom.

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642 Another of the contributory strengths of Kanuri feudalism in terms of survival was its flexibility, that is to say, its ability to expand and contract from the center. As long as the nucleus of a court and a monarch remained, no harm was done to its continued existence. Feudalism is a segmentary corporate structure; if the top remains, including the idea of its centrality and paramount position in the conception of the state, then the expansion and contraction of the state itself bears no relation whatsoever to its survival. Segments may break off, others may join on, but as long as there remains the tangible concept of some-

3: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1980 MS14 Kennedy MS14

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thing to join on to, then the size of the state is merely an expression of the administrative and military capacities of the government at any given time in its history, in relation to the same factors amongst its neighbour states.

634 647 662 one, before he was re-stationed to the capital city by the N.A. He had arrived several years ago in Magumeri as the jail keeper and the DH had given him a place to live within the walls of his own residence. In consequence almost all of the jailer's friendships and social relations were with people of the DH's extended household organization. This created a gap between the jailer and the other N.A. officials who felt that he was not completely trustworthy as a confidential friend, since gossip and criticism of the DH - a common topic of conversation - might be dangerous in his presence. Finally in 1955, the DH gave the jailer a young virgin of his household over whom he had marriage dispensation rights. This tied the relationship much tighter, and had the jailer stayed on in Magumeri, he would have been one of the few N.A. officials whom the DH could count on for subservient behaviour. (1)

The D.H.'s Relations to the Center

631 634 642 The formal and informal links of the DH to the capital are extremely complex and are only treated here in summary form. (2)

Formally the DH is responsible to only one body in the political organization of Bornu, viz. the Shehu-in-Council. This body under the chairmanship of the Wazir (the Chief Councillor) decides on the policies of the State, draws up the annual budget, heads up the various departments of the N.A., acts as a court in trying cases of N.A.

[648] (1) This move was not due to machinations in the N.A. A new, young British officer was at the time zealously working on the Bornu prison system and felt that more warders were needed in Maiduguri, which soon became the accepted policy. In the colonial service of Northern Nigeria, shifts and changes of various kinds can be labelled "improvements" in Reports, and the young officer receives some merit for his conscientiousness. C.f. the picture given by Joyce Cary, in his novel Mr. Johnson, of the British officers in Northern Nigeria, each with his own peculiar "improvement" enthusiasm.

[114] (2) A separate study of these relations is being prepared in collaboration with Prof. A. G. Frank, comparing the role of the DH with that of the Russian industrial manager.

631 personnal, and ratifies all appointments, dismissals and transfers of
634 the N.A. The DH may be informed of directives either from the Wasiri's
642 office or from the relevant Department which would also inform their local District personnel.

648 Officially, today, the British personnel both technical and administrative, perform an advisory, not an authoritative, part in the political organisation. Although much of the "advice" is given at the center, there is some contact between the colonial service officials and the District during the touring duty of the officers. Such visits are always publicised beforehand to the local officials and the British officer is always accompanied by a Shehu's Representative. Technical officers are generally concerned with their own particular program in the area and unless they feel that the local authorities are being uncooperative, they do not interfere in local or State politics. The administrative officers have a much wider range of interests which covers all areas of government not directly under the concern of some technical department, i.e. taxation, courts of law, District Councils (local government) and complaints by the peasants against their chiefs. Some also take an interest in one or more technical branch and report their findings to the relevant department after their touring duties have brought them into contact with local programs.

634 Informally the DH has a house in the palace ward in the
203 capital and his followers there are links between himself and the
[631] center. The Wakil (chief follower) in charge of the town house visits the Shehu regularly and represents the DH in the capital. Besides this source of contact with the center, the DH receives information from N.A. messengers, policeman and traders who travel continually from Maiduguri through the Districts. By the judicious giving of gifts to

[p 329]

Chapter X

Summary and Conclusions

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The description of pre-Colonial Bornu has indicated that despite the rise and fall of its fortune the Kanuri political organization has had a remarkable resiliency throughout the last millenium. As long as the system of feudal organization remained with its nucleus at the capital city and court of the monarch, then the rise and fall of the empire was not fatal to its continuity. Kanuri feudalism is a segmentary corporate political structure; while the top remains intact, the expansion and contraction of the State itself bears no relation to its survival.

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The traditional background from which the present society obtains its roots has been altered in this century by contact with British colonialism. In Northern Nigeria the administration was deeply affected by the views of its founder Lugard, whose own control of the organization of the regional colonial service ensured that many of its norms, procedures and its overall policy would be an embodiment of his personal philosophy of colonialism. In Bornu, this meant that the pre-Rabeh Kanuri leaders regained their old positions, the Shehu was placed at the head of the State (now called the Bornu Emirate), and the fief-holders now called District Heads or Ajias, went to live in "bush" on their respective fiefs. The Village Heads within each district were appointed because of hereditary claims to the position while the District Heads over them were chosen because of their relationship to the monarch and/or other powerful groups at the capital. This set up possible conflicts between DH's and the Village Heads in their districts which has lasted to the present day. The policy of the British was to rule through and strengthen the authority of the native leaders, while

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175 enforcing compliance with the "fundamental laws of humanity" (which
648 ruled out the slave trade). The European and the African were to co-
642 operate in administering the country but live separate lives socially,
[563] while western ideas and technology were to be introduced slowly when and if they would be acceptable, and only when capable of being financed on local revenues.

175 Out of this organization there grew a readily identifiable
648 English sub-culture whose uniqueness was a product of its particular
563 English upper class background and its adjustment to the common stimulus of Northern Nigeria. Their standards of administrative judgment came from Lugard and their common origins in English society; their hopes and fears, frustrations and satisfactions, grew out of the common work situation to be found in the British administration of the northern Emirates.

Because of the dearth of trained local personnel for carrying on the day to day office work and record-keeping of administration, the southern Nigerian, predominantly the Ibo, was introduced to Bornu. They soon came as skilled and semi-skilled labourers, carpenters, builders, bricklayers, mechanics and traders, and so in Bornu a minority group of southerners, mostly Christian, and more acculturated to Western ways became an established, although separate, part of the society.

175 After the inception of colonial rule the interaction be-
648 tween the British administration and the native political organization soon settled into a fairly steady pattern in which the British pushed continually for conformity to their own values in political organization, education, taxation, trade, etc. The Bornu officials and others who contacted the British, in their response, maintained as much of Kanuri culture as they could while at the same time learning what to

177 441 duced new wants in consumer goods, and encouraged the spread of cash cropping and native middlemen to fill roles as distributors of western products, and as buyers of cash crops at the village level.

178 648 642 However, the Bornu Emirate under the British was not the same article as its 19th century predecessor. Its boundaries were now permanently delimited and required no great responsibility on the part of the local people to defend or expand. The military power of the Shehu and control of "foreign affairs" with other Sudanic military powers had now been taken over by the British, who performed these functions in accordance with the imperial policies of the colonial government of England. Indeed the need for militarism all but vanished since the Bornu political organization and territory were now dependent upon the position and policy of Great Britain in world affairs.

The policies of indirect rule created a climate of control wherein the previous cultural life could continue; however, because of the intrusion of the British administration into the top of the society as a controlling caste who were supposed to rule through local authorities, there occurred a potential weakening of the indigenous political [182] organization. Although a high degree of integration of law, religion and social organization remained, and all functioned to support authority, there were no other authorities at the top of Kanuri society. Unlike the authorities in the traditional society, the British had different values and goals. Because both traditional standards of performance and goals and the new ones are both enforceable, new conflicts have become possible in the contemporary society, especially in the political sphere.

602 571 In order to place kinship in a larger social context, behaviour associated with kinship has been categorized under four somewhat

621 571 in households contiguous to their superiors. The Kanuri have no name for this constant and fundamental organisation in their society. However it is a major conclusion of this study that the organisational characteristics of what we have here labelled the extended household organisation is the basic link between the structure of local, small scaled social interactions and the wider scaled political and economic organisation of the Emirate.

631 571 The Emirate as a whole is segmentary and hierarchical structure of authority running from the Shehu-in-Council down to the lowly peasant compound. For such a system to work most efficiently there should be a pyramidal system of control from one final power through followers, to followers of followers and so on. This makes each man in the state link up hierarchically and personally to the man above him. Any conflicts between segments can be minimized and controlled if all members of the system are sensitive to the power at the top of the structure. In the language of the present discussion lower level members are (ideally) subordinates in the extended household organization of the next higher level in the political structure.

631 • 642 In practice there are factors present which make it impossible for the Kanuri political organization to be a simple hierarchy of authority so that each man looks to the man above him in the structure. For power and potential power in the future is segmented at the center of the State among the agnatic lineage members of the royal family and the top leaders of N.A. Thus the lower echelons of the political pyramid are lined up, not behind a unitary repository [648] of power at the center, but many. The power of the British tends even more to break up any possible unity which might occur at the top of the political organization, and tends besides to create ambiguous

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648 and conflicting standards of performance for incumbents of political roles.

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665 The results of this complexity leads to large factions each under one of the segments of power at the center of the State. Or again in the terminology adapted here - there are large extended household organizations beginning at the center of the State and incorporating in their control all DH's and Lawans (and through the Lawans, all Wards, Hamlets and compounds). Traditionally the ruler kept faction leaders close to his capital and could replace them at any time by followers, slaves or eunuchs. The ruler's subordinates made sure that the line of authority between themselves and their fief and its subjects was a loyal one. Only upon the death of a ruler was there much danger of factional disputes disrupting the political organization of the State.

[178] Today this system is in difficulty because the factional segments are not under the control of any one source of power. Because of the shifts in personnel and in personal fortunes due to conflicts with British standards, and new avenues of political success (the N.A.) at the center, the segments cross-cut one another. Thus a Lawan who is a loyal follower of a DH in district X finds himself in district Y under another DH. Or a DH finds that he has N.A. personnel from the capital in his district who are connected to political segments beyond his control.

Integrative organizational tendencies tend to offset some of the present difficulties. We have seen how DH's try to incorporate Lawans into their own organization or, if this is not possible, the DH attempts to replace them with trustworthy followers. Informal communication channels are developed so that forecasts of changes in

631 policy or its enforcement can be predicted accurately by incumbents of
642 political roles. However, the conflicts in the political system of Bornu
665 have caused much labour turn-over and until a more integrated system of political goals and standards of performance is possible this turn-over will continue.

Political parties in Bornu reflect the contemporary political structure of the Emirate and its relation to the rest of the country. Because of Nigerian nationalism, Bornu is required by other Northern Nigerian Emirates to participate in national politics. Thus the powers in the society - the N.A. Council, the Mi's, the judiciary, i.e. the ruling class - have joined the political party which supports the interests of others like themselves in Northern Nigeria. The reform party which is against this representation of established power is viewed not as a democratic opposition but as a threat to the moral foundations of the Kanuri State.

511 Kanuri consumption patterns indicate what materials and services the people utilize in the pursuance of their way of life and gives
[433] us a basis to compare Bornu with other areas of the world. In North American terms, the Kanuri have an exceedingly low level of consumption and production. The analysis has enabled us to estimate that an average four person family in Bornu requires in the neighbourhood of $180.00 per year to maintain their cultural "norms of living".(1) As we have seen, almost all rural families grow some subsistence crops so that this figure does not represent actual cash income, but rather the value of materials

(1)This term has been defined as "the aspirations or expectations of a people, that is, the living conditions which they seek to obtain or regain, or which they regard as fitting and proper for themselves to enjoy." See Lasker, Bruno, Standards and Planes of Living, in Southern and Eastern Asia, prepared for the twelfth conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations, Kyoto, Japan, 1954 (mimeographed), p. 10.

4: Cohen E-5 (1956-1957) 1961
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121 work. This means that minute details of innovation and social life in general can be recorded at the level of the "common man" as contrasted with the analysis of regional or national productivity figures, or of government policies, or United Nations statistics. What emerges is not, therefore, a total picture of *the development* process, but rather a grass roots view of the reaction to planned culture change by the people at whom the programme was aimed in the first place.

The purpose of this article is to document and analyse an innovation that succeeded technically, and yet failed because the human components of the innovation experience were not taken into account.

101 The place is Africa, the time is 1956-57. But it could very well be the Near East, Asia or South America, anytime between 1940 and 1960. The people are the Kanuri of Bornu Province, Northern Nigeria, but they could be peasants anywhere.

The Context

174 The Kanuri of Bornu province in northeastern Nigeria have
175 been organized as a Muslim emirate in the Chad basin for
[130] many centuries. Their language classification by Greenberg
[642] (1954), early Arabic sources, and the scattered work of a few interested scholars, supports the notion of their continuity in the region, with possible origins somewhere to the northeast of
[177] their present habitat. The pre-colonial emirate kept up continual trade and cultural contacts with the Maghreb during its long history as an organized state.

161 The Kanuri number about one and a half million. The
311 population density is approximately sixty per square mile and there is no pressure on farmland, which can be extended simply by clearing new bush areas further away from the population
433 settlements. The majority of the people are peasants who carry
241 on three analytically separable economic activities. These consist
44 of (1) farming, primarily millet and guinea corn, supplemented by maize, beans, squashes, cucumbers, and groundnuts, (2) cash
[434] cropping, mostly groundnuts, and (3) a dry season non-farming activity connected with the market. Market activities are in

4: Cohen E-5 (1956-1957) 1961
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Linton (1952: 77) has also suggested that peasants view any attempts to change their economic condition with suspicion when these originate from their rulers. The peasant, often quite justifiably, feels that anything his rulers offer as a chance to improve conditions is probably much more to the ruler's advantage than to his own.

This was very certainly the case in Magumeri, and had occurred several times before. Thus, only a few weeks before the fertilizer demonstration began, the Village Head of Magumeri had tried to convince people of the worthiness of literacy. His argument centered around the idea that when literate the peasants would be able to catch their rulers, including himself, for issuing false tax receipts (Cohen and Frank, 1960). When the people refused to volunteer he forced a number of individuals to sign up for the literacy courses. It is difficult to say exactly how many were forced to "volunteer" for the fertilizer demonstration, but that coercion was involved is undoubtedly true.

On the other hand, a strange and almost unprecedented thing occurred at the final meeting when the people were asked whether or not they would use the fertilizer in the coming year. District Council meetings were usually very stiff affairs in which a formal agenda was followed under the guidance of a British District Officer. Very often a District Head rehearsed these "democratic" meetings first to make sure motions would be seconded, voted on properly, etc. On this occasion, an African District Officer was present, and the District Head gave the members of the Council a definite choice as to whether they would accept the fertilizer or not. Bornu is an autocratic country and subordinates are usually ordered about, unless the matter is a trivial one. The outward signs of democratic procedures introduced by colonial rule are very superficially imposed upon feudal autocracy, so that effective social action is carried out dictatorially. This is an ancient society and people are traditionally accustomed to these procedures. That dictatorial powers were not invoked over the decision to use, or not use, fertilizer in years to come, immediately defined it as a trivial and unimportant matter upon which people could make up their own minds.